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**Justice: The Biblical Challenge. By Walter J. Houston, Pp. ix + 155.  
(Biblical Challenges in the Contemporary World.) Oakville, CT: Equinox,  
2010. ISBN 978 1 84553 888 0, Paper £15.99**

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about the message that must be brought in God's name' (Sanders, p. 137) and not to assume God is being silent and tune in (Sarot, pp. 150–1), combined together form a more nuanced reaction to divine silence, which better captures the multiplicity of biblical responses to times of perceived divine silence.

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*Justice: The Biblical Challenge.* By WALTER J. HOUSTON.  
Pp. ix + 155. (Biblical Challenges in the Contemporary World.) Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2010. ISBN 978 1 84553 888 0. Paper £15.99.

THIS volume is a contribution to a series that aims to convey how to translate biblical concepts effectively into interpretation and action in modern society with particular relevance for Christian or other faith communities who regard the biblical literature as authoritative. The present volume on societal justice or fairness is organized into eight chapters with two introductions, four chapters of biblical examples, and two reflections on modern society.

Although a common way to introduce thoughts about biblical justice is with the well-known verse in Amos, 'But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream' (Amos 5:24), Houston begins with a helpful overview of definitions of justice in order to enable the reader better to understand biblical examples and to see how the topic has been understood by interpreters of religious texts (ch. 1). The examination seeks to ascertain in what sense and to what extent religious texts that promote authoritative and alternative stories relevant to communities of faith can be said to promote fairness in society. The second introductory chapter, 'The Ancient Social Contexts', presents an overview of society based on biblical as well as archaeological data in order to shed light on where issues of justice arose in the ancient world. The chapter contains information on how issues of justice would have been regarded and also, to some extent, worked out in the various communities in the Old and New Testament periods, examined under the categories of the village, the state, the city, and the religious

community or sect. In so doing, it provides a significant overview that enables readers not well versed in the social relations of the ancient world and antiquity to have a better understanding of the types of challenges that would have arisen in interpersonal as well as societal relationships. It also discusses how they are different and similar to those experienced by communities at the present time.

The next four chapters explore in closer detail issues of justice and indeed injustice found within different biblical presentations. In particular, the concepts of justice mediated by a king (also the deity as king), by a patron, within a community of equals, and by the example of a servant leader provide overarching themes illuminated by material from the Old and New Testaments. Chapter 3 includes the story of creation and concentrates on the establishment of cosmic order with attention to the role of the king who participates in its maintenance and who ideally should dispense justice with impartiality. The fourth chapter focuses on the type of justice found in conjunction with a patron and is based on the actions of Yahweh on behalf of client Israel in the events of the Exodus. Chapter 5 investigates ancient Israel as a community of equals as promoted within the Torah, in which people are regarded as on an equal footing before God and each other (also discussed in relation to the concept of unity in Christ). Issues of fairness to women and to resident aliens, and their application, feature within the discussion. Chapter 6 provides a succinct analysis of the story of Jesus (according to the Gospel of Mark) as an example of the reversal of expectations of justice found in the three prior biblical examples (king, patron, and community of equals). Justice according to the example of the servant leader, or messianic justice, is conceived of as the restoration of fairness for outcast members of society by a community committed to discipleship and service to one another.

The last two chapters appropriate the insights illuminated by the biblical examples of justice for contemporary society as well as for the reader. Chapter 7 presents the story of our world, and evaluates the establishment and maintenance of justice in a type of justice audit. It examines in reverse order the ideologies of justice disclosed by the biblical examples (the community of equals, justice as fairness, and justice as right order) and considers to what extent the modern world (with particular examples from the USA and UK) can be said to share in the fairness promoted in the biblical literature. It is a stark chapter that outlines the failure of modern democratic societies in promoting systems of fairness for all members of society. The

final chapter (ch. 8) covers the topic of 'Our Story' and concludes with practical ways in which individuals and communities (especially communities of faith) can promote and reinforce the ideals of justice in action.

The book follows a clear structure and keeps coming back to themes in order to show how a new examination of justice in the biblical literature can be thought of in modern terms. At the same time, it fosters a sense of distance from the biblical world. This is an important step because it is neither possible nor desirable simply to draw attention to biblical examples of justice and apply them in whole cloth to modern concepts, situations, and systems. Through the examination of a variety of permutations of justice in the biblical literature and by noting where they were ideological rather than practical, as well as where they fell short of the total inclusion of members of society in fair dealings, the volume provides one way of thinking through the topic of justice with the inclusion of biblical material as a constructive dialogue partner. Those not of a confessional background can gain insight into biblical approaches to fairness. At the same time, the volume is directed towards an audience for whom the Bible is authoritative and it provides some examples for how one can participate in the biblical goal of the enactment of justice. A weakness, though, is that many different examples are brought together from the Old and New Testaments, which is at times dizzying for one new to the topic.

The book is well suited for Christian or other faith communities to consider in round-table discussions as well as for the classroom seminar where other literature on justice is drawn upon for reference and debate.

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*Spiritual Complaint: The Theology and Practice of Lament.*

Edited by MIRIAM J. BIER and TIM BULKELEY.

Pp. xvi + 280. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2014.

ISBN 978 0 227 17434 0. Paper £22.50/\$45.

MIRIAM J. BIER and Tim Bulkeley have skilfully drawn together a collection of essays, which not only touch the nerves of pain and suffering and advance the understanding of lament, but also